

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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FM AMCONSUL QUEBEC

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 972

INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

AMCONSUL MONTREAL

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMCONSUL TORONTO

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE QUEBEC 0166

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, CA, FR

SUBJECT: GISCARD D'ESTAING TO RECEIVE QUEBEC MINISTER

1. QUEBEC MINISTER OF INTER-GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS, CLAUDE MORIN, IS TO BE RECEIVED BY FRENCH PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING DURING HIS OFFICIAL VISIT TO PARIS APRIL 27-29, ACCORDING TO ANNOUNCEMENT MADE TO PRESS IN QUEBEC TODAY BY MORIN HIMSELF. PURPOSE OF HIS VISIT, ACCORDING TO MINISTER, IS TO DISCUSS FRANCO-QUEBEC COOPERATION AND PRIVILEGED RELATIONS WHICH QUEBEC HAS ENJOYED FOR SOME YEARS WITH FRANCE. MORIN SAID GOQ DOES NOT EXPECT FRANCE TO GIVE ACTIVE SUPPORT FOR ITS EFFORTS ACHIEVE SOVEREIGNTY. THIS IS INTERNAL POLITICAL QUESTION, HE SAID, WHICH CAN ONLY BE RESOLVED BY QUEBECOIS THEMSELVES.

2. COMMENT: QUEBEC'S SPECIAL RELATIONS WITH FRENCH GOVERNMENTS DATE BACK TO VISIT TO PARIS IN 1891 BY QUEBEC PRIME MINISTER MERCIER WHEN, ACCORDING TO LOCAL HISTORIANS, HE WAS RECEIVED "LIKE A CHIEF OF STATE" BY FRENCH PRESIDENT CARNOT. IN MORE
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RECENT TIMES, QUEBEC PRIME MINISTERS HAVE ROUTINELY BEEN RECEIVED WITH CEREMONY BY FRENCH PRESIDENTS WHEN ON OFFICIAL VISITS TO FRANCE. HOWEVER, TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, THIS IS THE FIRST TIME A MINISTER OF LESSER RANK HAS BEEN INVITED TO THE ELYSEE. MOREOVER, WHEN MORIN'S PARIS VISIT WAS FIRST ANNOUNCED IN ROUTINE PRESS COMMUNIQUE, IT WAS SAID THAT HE HAD BEEN INVITED TO CALL UPON PRIME MINISTER BARRE; THERE WAS NO MENTION OF CONTACT WITH THE

PRESIDENT. IN CONTRAST, TODAY'S ANNOUNCEMENT WAS MADE TO PRESS
BY MINISTER HIMSELF IN EVIDENT EFFORT TO INDICATE POLITICAL
IMPORTANCE QUEBEC ATTACHES TO PRESIDENTIAL INVITATION.
DISCLAIMERS OF FRENCH ACTIVE SUPPORT FOR QUEBEC INDEPENDENCE MAY
HAVE BEEN THROWN IN AT REQUEST OF GOF TO ALLOW THEM DENY INTERFERENCE
IN INTERNAL POLITICS OF CANADA. NONETHELESS, MOST QUEBECOIS WILL
INTERPRETE PRESIDENTIAL INVITATION BY PREVIOUSLY ALOOF GISCARD AS
SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN GOF ATTITUDE TOWARDS QUEBEC. WHETHER STATUS
ACCORDED THIS VISIT BY FRENCH PRESAGES A RETURN TO EARLIER
GUALLIST ENCOURAGEMENT OF QUEBECOIS REMAINS TO BE SEEN. COMING
ON HEELS OF FRENCH AFRICAN INITIATIVES, ONE IS TEMPTED FROM OTHER
SIDE OF ATLANTIC TO SURMISE INVITATION COULD BE PART OF MORE
ACTIVIST FRENCH FOREIGN POLICY. WHATEVER FRENCH MOTIVES, P.Q.
IS OBVIOUSLY DELIGHTED, PARTICULARLY AS PRESTIGE OF ELYSEE
VISIT LIKELY UPSTAGE FEDERAL MINISTER LALONDE WHO WILL ALSO
BE IN PARIS NEXT WEEK.
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